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The Social Questions Bulletin

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THE METHODIST FEDERATION FOR SOCIAL SERVICE
(UNOFFICIAL)

An organization which rejects the method of the struggle for profit as the economic base for society; which seeks to replace it with social-economic planning in order to develop a society without class distinctions and privileges.

150 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY

Secretaries: HARRY F. WARD, WINIFRED L. CHAPPELL, CHARLES C. WEBBER

The general policies of this publication are determined by the Executive Committee of the Methodist Federation for Social Service, subject to approval by the General Council of the Federation. The selection of topics and material is committed to the Secretaries, who are responsible to the Federation and to the public for its accuracy.

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FOREWORD

With this number we begin a new plan. From now on every other issue will consist of news about Religion and Social Action—first in our own church and then in general. As soon as possible financially we will return to our former schedule of a mid-month number of this character. When we get sufficient support we will issue weekly.

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GEER-KIRKPATRICK

The Case Down to Date: "When I was told three months ago," said Bishop Blake, "that plans were on foot to rid the Board of Education of its liberal leadership, I refused to believe it. When I was told by one in authority that certain of my episcopal colleagues were in the plot, I denied it. I said, *It can't happen here.* But it has happened. Two of our most brilliant and effective leaders have been sacrificed to please a small group of Methodist reactionaries and the Hearst press."

The simple facts of the case are as follows. With the Columbus General Conference came in a New Deal in the Board of Education. For the past four years Bishop Edgar Blake has been head of the Board of Education. When the Board of Bishops cast the ballot for the five episcopal representatives on the Board of Education, Bishop Blake received only eight votes. Bishop Leonard was made chairman of the Board.

In the meantime Owen Geer and Blaine Kirkpatrick of the Young People's Department of this Board were in receipt of a letter from Dr. F. C. Eiselen, corresponding secretary of the Board, which gave fair warning of the inevitable:

"Whatever may be the reason, there is a definite and articulated attack on the personal leadership of the department . . . I am convinced that it would be futile to nominate the present personnel to the new Board of Education. There would be an overwhelming vote against confirmation . . . I can see only one peaceful way out of the present distress, namely your voluntary withdrawal from the positions you have occupied."

This both Geer and Kirkpatrick found it impossible to do. "To do so would be to concede the validity of the criticism which has been made and would in no wise strengthen the confidence of young people in the church nor in our work."

Dr. Eiselen has floundered in a Sargasso Sea of nots, buts and thoughs. "The issue is *not* one of principle *but* of method and technique and it has finally become a question of personnel, *though* there has never been the slightest doubt as to the personal character and devotion of Dr. Kirkpatrick and Mr. Geer."

Reassurances as to the identity of future with past objectives likewise seem caught in further entanglements. "Under the new leadership there will *not* be any essential change in the program of objectives, *but* I fully believe that we will succeed more completely in meeting the responsibilities which we have toward our entire youth constituency, toward the church in general, toward the total program of Christian education, and toward the requirements which we all recognize for cooperation with God in building a new world." A good safe program, in other words, primarily devoted to pleasing everybody and destined to stir up no opposition because of definite accomplishment.

On July 1st the Board of Education met and failed to reappoint Geer and Kirkpatrick. Specific reasons: "to relieve tension and promote greater harmony and efficiency."

Now the effectiveness of the Geer-Kirkpatrick leadership and program, its methods and techniques, cannot be gainsaid. During the past five years (1930-1935) while Methodist church membership has decreased by 300,000 and Sunday school enrollment by 400,000. Epworth League membership shows an increase of over 42,000. Board officials are in substantial agreement as to the respect and confidence in which these leaders are held by the young people of the church, "to whom the change

in leadership will come as a terrible shock." (Eiselen.)

Yet, says Bishop Blake, "with such a record to their credit the Board has cast them aside. Such short-sightedness in any secular business would be looked upon as folly. The brethren who are led of the Lord call it wisdom. . . . It will require some explaining to make the church understand why such men should be pushed aside in such a critical day."

This whole episode reveals two things that need reflection and call for action:

First, a man without experience or competence in the educational field, is made head of the Board of Education, displacing a man of recognized technical capacity. This is functional incompetence on the part of the church machine. It indicates that as an organization the Methodist Episcopal Church has entered the stage of decline. Why?

Next, the reactionaries take the offensive and get away with it. This again follows the general social pattern. The liberals don't want a split. In their tactics they put unity before principle. But the reactionaries are determined to rule or ruin. It is their nature and their role in history. What are the liberals going to do about it? Anything?

Suggestions to Methodist Young People in the Present Crisis: Dr. Eiselen's prophecy has been fulfilled. To Methodist young people who have been at work under these trusted leaders, this change of leadership has indeed come "as a terrible shock." To them we say:

1. Safeguard your program. The Board has promised that it shall go on essentially as outlined. See to it that the promise is kept.
2. Define that program in articles in the church press, particularly in the *Epworth Herald.* Keep the church reminded of what it has promised you. Publicize your check on the church's fulfillment of its promise.
3. Keep a hand on your institutes. Who is selected to instruct and lead you there, and by whom? Insist on having a voice in this selection.
4. Help control your local situation. Bring in an occasional speaker from the outside to lead in discussions of vital issues. Either from or through the Federation such speakers can be obtained.
5. In short—don't give up, don't get out. Stay where you are—the constantly renewed and renewing leaven of our Methodist Christian Youth Movement.

VETERANS AND PREACHERS

Dr. Henry H. Crane in his final sermon before his departure for a year's trip around the world, spoke out from his Scranton (Pa.) pulpit against the "stalking infringement and menace of Fascism in America," arousing the anger of local American Legion posts. One commander countered with an attack against the American League Against War and Fascism: "We aggressively oppose this organization. . . . As men who came from a war to end all wars, we recognize the left-handed attempts of idealists to break down our practical approach to peace." But do they recognize the futility of that "war to end all wars" and of all other such "practical approaches to peace"?

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One interesting by-product of the "Hearst-motivated plan to block freedom of speech in Seattle" last February when the Legion and other super-patriotic organizations attempted to bar Harry F. Ward from the platforms in the city, was the effect on the Legion itself. Dr. Ward finally spoke in the Civic Auditorium and E. Raymond Attebery, Seattle Methodist minister and State Chaplain of the Legion, openly defied the State Adjutant, publicly thanking Dr. Ward for his fine address. "I have had calls from all over the area from Legion men praising my stand for freedom of speech and saying that they would back me to the last ditch in that viewpoint," writes Mr. Attebery. "There is no question but what much good has come out of this conflict so far as the Legion and the community are concerned."

Of Dr. Ward's address itself, the *Seattle-Star* reported: "Far from preaching 'force and violence,' Dr. Ward merely advised Americans—and especially American Legion men—to be sure they will know how to act when and if the will of a Fascistic minority is imposed upon them by force and violence. Chiefly, his plea was for the recognition, use and appreciation of 'the orderly processes of democracy set forth in the Constitution of the United States.' And to that heartfelt plea there is not one of us who cannot say 'Amen'!"

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"Rev. S— is an ardent pacifist of strong communistic leanings. He is affiliated with the Federal Council of Churches of Christ and has just recently attempted to circulate its petitions to the President of the United States demanding the cancellation of all spring maneuvers of the army and the navy. The Federal Council had its founding in Soviet Russia. He has been very outspoken in condemning all patriotic organizations and all they stand for. He bitterly opposes the teachings of patriotism to children in school and the operation of military schools, C.M.T.C. camps, and R.O.T.C. units in colleges, giving as his reason that it fosters militarism. Also he has never missed an opportunity to preach the gospel of the National Economy League. We believe that you should closely watch his activities and stand ready to check each and every attempt he makes along these lines in —." *From a letter circulated by a local V.F.W. post.*

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Apropos of recent Methodist General Conference action, the *Army and Navy Register* proposes:

(1) "That the war and navy departments terminate under proper procedure the commissions of all Methodist chaplains in regular land or naval forces who uphold 'the peace

pact of Methodists'; (2) That the war and navy departments terminate, for the convenience of the government, all reserve commissions held by Methodist clergymen and laymen; (3) That the war and navy departments refuse to accept for a citizen's training camp, or for instruction in collegiate officers' training corps units, any members of that Church."

Says the *Christian Century:* "The *Army and Navy Register's* proposals and the pronouncements of the General Conference fit together like the two parts of a tunnel that have been driven toward each other from opposite sides of a mountain until they meet to make one continuous highway."

THE CHURCH AND REACTION

The Pulpit and William Randolph Hearst: Heywood Broun, expostulating with a minister who had selected a daily text for the editorial page of the *New York American:* "There are men and even political parties in the land today who preach the spirit of a cooperative community such as Jesus outlined to his followers. These men are branded in the Hearst press as agitators and reds. Anybody who raises his voice for human rights against the dead weight of property rights is assailed by William Randolph Hearst. If the old man of San Simeon can be imagined as having lived many centuries ago, you know as well as I do what his reaction would have been when he heard the report of the advice given to a certain rich young man. The Hearst press of Jerusalem would have denounced that Teacher. It would have called upon Pontius Pilate to imprison first and then deport the outside agitator from Galilee."

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"Certain sensational journals have shown a growing disregard for both decency and truth. . . . They have fanned the flames of race prejudice and stirred war passions on every occasion. . . . We urge Methodists to refrain from patronizing such organs. We ask those of our members who are approached to furnish Biblical texts for the Hearst papers—to refuse."—*New York East Conference Journal, 1936.*

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Father Coughlin and Gerald K. Smith. "The skillful manipulation of emotion and religious fervor" to demagogic ends was vividly illustrated at the Townsend convention where Catholic priest and Protestant minister joined forces to further a movement which at any moment may become, especially under such leadership, a bulwark of fascism.

THE INOFFENSIVE CHURCH

Jerome Davis, writing on the thesis that organized religion can never be independent of the econimic climate in which it lives, illustrates as follows: "At the end of 1935 the Mack Utility Investigating Committee disclosed what happened to the Long Island Lighting Company. On a three million dollar investment the company had paid $11,000,000 in dividends in nine years, practically all of this sum going to four insiders. Four insiders took $85,000 each as a commission for having arranged the purchase of a subsidiary. The property of the company cost $1,500,000 but the Christian head of the corporation thought nothing of permitting it to be assessed for taxes at $670,000 and at the same time evaluating it for rate making purposes before the utility commission at over $4,000,000. The head of the corporation and its corporate lawyer are both prominent Methodist Church members, yet they doubtless thought these transactions in entire harmony with their religious professions. . . . Naturally the result of church control by capitalistic groups" he concludes, "both directly and financially, has resulted in a pattern of behavior which does not on the whole offend capitalism."

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Apropos of the Pope's tacit approbation of Italy's role in Ethiopia, *The Christian Century* points out: (1) That the Pope has a clear-cut message to governments and the courage to declare it and apply it to specific situations *only* when the rights and privileges of the Church are involved, and (2) that this is an illustration of a danger that besets all organized religion—the danger that it will become more concerned for the maintenance of its own institutional power and prestige than for the advancement of the interests for which religion and churches exist. Churches, like the Sabbath, were made for man and not man for churches.

RED BAITING

An appeal to business men to be on their guard against "The Red Network propagandists" is made by Dr. Worth M. Tippy of the Federal Council in the July issue of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce's *Nation's Business.* Referring to the *Red Network,* Dr. Tippy says: "I counted 17 errors of fact and inference in the brief reference to the Federal Council of Churches in the *Red Network.* Is not that enough to discredit any publication and any organization which circulates such literature?"

The Black Legion: Religion—Incitement or Check?: The Black Legion, a secret, terroristic organization for the purpose of waging warfare against Catholics, foreign-born, Jews, Negroes and Communists, has been uncovered in Michigan. The initiation ritual contains, among others, the following questions: "Are you honestly a Protestant? What church do you believe in or attend? Do you believe in a Supreme Being, a future reward and punishment?" The Protestant churches of the United States should deeply search their consciences to find out why their teachings can lead even the most degraded minds to murder and torture, and to denial of brotherhood to so many inhabitants of this country. It would seem to be an obligation of the churches to teach a social gospel so clear that such scoundrels could not possibly claim their sanction.—*New Republic.*

Read this report of a Michigan revival sermon (M. E. Church, Sparta, April 19): "The speaker informed us that a Socialist is a Democrat with his brains knocked out and a Communist one with his heart taken out, that they were Siamese twins and one could not be killed without the other, and he was trying to get rid of both." What would be the effect of a sermon like this on "Black Legion" psychology?

Read too the report of the Federal Council on the operations of the Black Legion: "These disclose the extreme of cruelty and social danger to which a red-baiting, anti-Semitic, anti-Negro, anti-Catholic, organization easily goes. We appeal to Christians throughout the nation to exercise the utmost vigor in opposing such tendencies as these, which are sowing fears, hatreds and dissensions at a time of great social emergency and danger, when our people should be able to think soberly and to act unitedly." How can such Council principles be effectively applied in local situations?

OPINIONS DIFFER

"The economic order, to my way of thinking, has nothing to do with spiritualism. [sic.] The institutional life of this nation that has had for its objective the strengthening of the spiritual, all of its character-building agencies, have not been supported by Dr. Ward and his type but have been supported by those who lead in that indefinite thing we call 'Americanism' . . . I can find no relationship between what we call spirituality and the economic system."—T. W. Appleby.

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"Christianity was not intended to upset governmental and constitutional machinery, stir up hatred and be the tool of scheming radicals; but to give men the message of salvation and the code of daily living as proclaimed by Christ."—Wilbur Helm, secretary Conference of Methodist Laymen.

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"Neither you, nor anyone else, ever heard of 'Fascism' until the agents of the Third International of Moscow began preaching such treasonable 'rot' as this Rev. Harry F. Ward and the agents of the Bolshevik Commissars spout."—*The American Christian Union.*

NOTES

The Christian Social Action Fellowship (Don Chase, Calvary Church, San Francisco, chairman) lists among its activities: the publishing of the *Social Informant;* the holding of conferences on social problems at various times and places; a book-and-pamphlet cooperative for low-cost distribution of valuable printed material. The fellowship has taken a definite stand in backing the Federation, as has, likewise, the Detroit Conference Fellowship for Social Action which has "made the claims of the Federation a primary consideration, *with emphasis upon membership.*" In the latter Conference plans are being made for intensive social evangelism, "gospel team fashion."

One preacher in California has taken pictures of conditions in agricultural workers' camps and has written articles for the *Sacramento Bee.* His work has aroused local sympathy and support for the workers. Another preacher has prevented city authorities from shutting off the water supply of peapickers' camp to break a strike. The strike was won.

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From Colorado comes the news of a permanent organization of Federation members in the state and of plans for "pushing the membership campaign and budget subscriptions more aggressively."

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From the April *Economic Justice* we quote two examples of Methodist social idealism in action. H. D. McGrath, Kingston, N. Y., has spoken at a meeting for the organization of shirt-workers under the Amalgamated Clothing Workers; when there was a strike in the Fuller Shirt Co. there. He addressed the strikers in their hall, and because they felt they were not getting a fair presentation of their case through the newspapers, permitted strikers to speak to an evening congregation. Norman L. Trott, Baltimore, Md., has picketed relief agencies with unemployed workers for better relief standards, assisted in the organization of the city-wide People's Unemployed Union, and of a group of young, liberally minded ministers in a Social Problems Clubs; has surveyed a neighboring Negro community; has opened church to L.I.D. series on social security, and to labor and unemployed groups of various kinds.

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Grace Scribner Still Speaking: The Caravan Pilgrimage organized in May by Rev. J. E. Lewin, pastor of the Hancock, Mich., M. E. Church, to the grave of Grace Scribner brought home to the young people of Copper County the fact that from just such a background a woman of profoundly prophetic vision could and did emerge. To our members it is scarcely necessary to say that *An American Pilgrimage* tells the story of this former Federation secretary—a source of authentic inspiration, from our Methodist history, for social idealism realized in action.

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Valuable both for its scope and practical detail is the 1936 report of the Social Service Committee of the New York East Conference. It deals forthrightly with such specific current issues as relief, social security, repressive legislation, industrial freedom, a clean press, public housing.

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Order through the Federation our new *Outline of a Christian Program for Social Change.* (5c.) Simple statement of our position and goal.

For the preparation of this BULLETIN *the Federation is indebted to Miss Helen Grace Murray, of Tionesta, Pa., a member of our National Committee of One Hundred.*